

Iowa Council on Human Services  
Public Hearing on SFY 2021 Budget Recommendations  
July 10, 2019

## **LEVERAGING FEDERAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE TO ADULTHOOD**

Twenty-six states are receiving federal funding to support extended foster care programs for youth ages 18 up to 21. It is time for Iowa to join these states and take advantage of the opportunity and funding to supplement the state's current investment in young people who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood in Iowa.

An average of 400 young people exit foster care placements in Iowa each year at age 18. These young adults face formidable challenges to a successful transition to adulthood. Many, if not most, have experienced trauma and disruptions in their lives that impact them well-into their twenties and potentially their whole lives. Research over the last two decades clearly demonstrates that youth who age out of foster care have poorer outcomes than their peers, lagging behind them in high school graduation and college enrollment, having safe and affordable housing, maintaining employment, and delaying parenting.

The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 allowed states to claim federal reimbursement through title IV-E of the Social Security Act for a portion of the cost of extending care up to the age of 21 to youth who now "age-out" at age 18. For the last several years, Iowa has expended approximately \$4 million in state appropriations each year for the Preparation for Adult Living Program. The services now provided without federal reimbursement under the PAL program have recently been approved by the federal Children's Bureau as "comparable" to extended care. But, unless the state formally extends foster care to this population of young adults, any potential federal matching funds are forfeited.

Iowa's current federal reimbursement (FMAP) rate is approximately 60% for foster care maintenance payments made on behalf of Title IV-E eligible youth. Because it is possible to reassess IV-E eligibility for youth over the age of 18 based on the young person's income alone, nearly all of the young people in extended care could be eligible for federal cost-sharing, maximizing the federal reimbursement.



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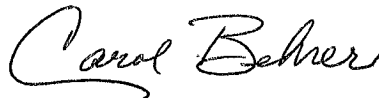
**Iowa Council on Human Services**  
**Public Hearing on SFY 2021 Budget Recommendations**  
**Page 2**

While results of Iowa's Aftercare and PAL program are encouraging, young people who age-out of foster care continue to lag their peers in virtually all outcome areas. Additional funds leveraged by extending foster care to age 21 would create opportunities to expand and enhance the services and supports available to these young adults.

Further, the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 allows the use of federal funds from the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood for supports and services to former foster youth up to the age of 24. By leveraging the federal funds for youth ages 18 to 21, Iowa would have the opportunity to redirect some of the Chafee funds to help young people address the challenges they continue to face into their early twenties.

I encourage the Council to recommend extending foster care to age 21 in Iowa as has been done by 26 other states across the country. At a minimum, it would be pragmatic for the Department to examine the opportunities that exist to build on the state's existing Aftercare infrastructure and weigh the costs and benefits of such a policy change. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Behrer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Carol Behrer, Executive Director  
Youth Policy Institute of Iowa